

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 HA-05 PC-01 IO-13 /086 W
-----037871 091933Z /43

O R 091806Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9480
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS CZ

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 1452

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, GT
SUBJECT: ELECTION SITREP #6

REF: GUATEMALA 1426

1. THE SITUATION AT THE GUATEMALA CITY ELECTORAL BOARD (WHICH HAS JURISDICTION OVER SOME 20 PERCENT OF THE NATIONAL VOTE) REMAINED BADLY CONFUSED AS OF EVENING MARCH 8. HEAD OF THE BOARD, MAYOR LEONEL PONCIANO, ADMITTED TO THE PRESS THAT IN A NUMBER OF CASES THE REPORTS FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF THE VOTING STATIONS (MESAS) DO NOT MATCH THE STATEMENTS (ACTAS) SIGNED BY THE VARIOUS REPRESENTATIVES (INCLUDING PARTY MEMBERS) OF THE VOTING STATIONS. (ON CLOSING A STATION, THE MEMBERS OF THE MESA ARE REQUIRED TO TABULATE THE VOTE AND TO SIGN A WRITTEN STATEMENT OF THE RESULT. THE PRESIDENT OF THE MESA ALSO IS REQUIRED TO INFORM THE MUNICIPAL ELECTORAL BOARD BY PHONE, TELEGRAPH, ETC., WHAT THE STATEMENT SAYS PENDING THE ARRIVAL OF THE DOCUMENTS AT THE BOARD.) AS A CONSEQUENCE
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OF THE ABOVE AND OTHER IRREGULARITIES IN TABULATING THE VOTE, FIVE OF THE EIGHT MAYORAL CANDIDATES HAVE PETITIONED THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL TO VOID THE MAYORAL ELECTION. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DCG) CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR SAID THAT HIS PARTY MAY ALSO ASK THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BE VOIDED. (PRIVATELY, CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC SOURCES DISCOUNT LIKELIHOOD OF THEIR REQUESTING ANNULMENT OF THE

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. THESE SOURCES ALSO CONCEDE THAT THEIR CANDIDATE DID NOT FINISH FIRST, BUT MAINTAIN THAT THEIR TALLIES SHOW PERALTA AZURDIA IN FIRST PLACE, WITH LUCAS THIRD.)

2. THE MAYORAL FRONTRUNNER WHEN THE FIRST IRREGULARITIES APPEARED WAS FORMER AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES COLONEL ABUNDIO MALONADO. MALDONADO CHARGED THE OTHERS WERE CONSPIRING AGAINST HIM AND SAID THAT HE HAD NO CONNECTION WITH ANY FRAUD. HE ALSO SAID THAT PADRE CHEMITA'S CHARGE THAT HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE CIA AND HAD WORKED THE VOTE FRAUD FROM THE UNITED STATES WAS A LIE. (CHEMITA CHARGES THAT AS AMBASSADOR, MALDONADO COLLECTED THE IDENTITY CARDS OF GUATEMALANS LIVING IN THE U.S. FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING PHANTOM VOTER REGISTRATIONS.)

3. ON THE NATIONAL FRONT, THERE IS A GOOD DEAL OF CONFUSION IN THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY WHERE THE ELECTORAL COUNCIL IS RECOUNTING THE TALLIES RECEIVED FROM THE VARIOUS ELECTORAL BOARDS. PARTISANS ARE TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE REGISTRAR'S POLICY (WHICH IS TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS FROM COUNCIL MEETINGS AND TO ISSUE PERIODIC BULLETINS OF THE RESULTS) BY PROVIDING THE PRESS WITH SUPPOSEDLY OFFICIAL RESULTS, WHICH IN REALITY ARE PARTY TALLIES. AS OF MID-MORNING MARCH 9 TALLY WE FURNISHED SIN REFTEL WAS THE LATEST RELEASED. PRESIDENT LAUGERUD PUBLICLY GAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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ESTIMATES OF SOMETIME SATURDAY, MARCH 11, FOR FINAL TALLY TO BE IN HAND. OTHER SOURCES INDICATE IT MAY BE EARLIER.

4. MEANWHILE, THE PERALTA AZURDIA AND LUCAS CAMPS ARE EXCHANGING CHARGES THAT THE OTHER IS PLOTTING A COUP; AND, AS ANTICIPATED, TALLY SHOWING LUCAS AHEAD PROMPTED FRESH MLN CHARGES OF RIGGING BY LUCAS PEOPLE.

5. IN HIS FIRST PUBLIC REMARKS SINCE ELECTION DAY, PRESIDENT LAUGERUD LATE MARCH 8 BERATED THE CONTENDING CANDIDATES FOR MAKING PREMATURE VICTORY CLAIMS, DISCOUNTED COUP RUMORS ("UN MAL ENDEMICO") AND CHIDED GUATEMALANS FOR THEIR "SELF-DESTRUCTIVE" TENDENCIES. HE TOO A WAIT-AND-SEE POSITION ON FRAUD CHARGES. IT WAS TOO EARLY TO SAY SINCE MUCH OF THE VOTING PAPERWORK STILL AWAITED REVIEW. MOREOVER, HUMAN ERROR WAS TO BE EXPECTED. IN ANY CASE THE ELECTORAL REGISTRY TALLY WAS A PRELIMINARY ONE, IN THAT IT FALLS TO THE CONGRESS TO COMPUTE THE RETURNS DEFINITELY. PRESS CONFERENCE TOOK PLACE AFTER NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL MET WITH HIM, OSTENSIBLY TO INFORM HIM OF DEATH THREATS SOME OF ITS MEMBERS HAD RECEIVED.

6. TO COMPLICATE MATTERS, LIGHT AND POWER WORKERS, WHO
HAD THREATENED WALK-OUT DURING LAST WEEK'S PUBLIC SECTOR
STRIKE, HAVE INDICATED THEY MAY STILL STRIKE IN SUPPORT
OF WRKERS OF ESMALTES Y ACEROS (GUATEMALA 1318).
STRIKE COULD MEAN DISRUPTION OF ELECTRICAL SERVICE TO
GUATEMALA CITY AREA.
BOSTER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTION RESULTS, ALLEGATIONS, ELECTION FRAUD
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978GUATEM01452
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780106-0814
Format: TEL
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780389/aaaacwzh.tel
Line Count: 124
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9a02d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 GUATEMALA 1426
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3390566
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ELECTION SITREP #6
TAGS: PINT, GT
To: STATE MANAGUA
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9a02d9ca-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014